



# ..CONNECTIONS NEWS..

*for the week of January 16 - 23, 2009*

*Developing a more caseworker centric system*

**CONNECTIONS Intranet site:** <http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/>

## FEATURED IN THIS EDITION

### *"Info to Know" for Caseworkers*

- **UPDATED** - Q4-08 Improvement Plan - Saturday, 1/24/09 ...pg. 1...more
- Two **NEW CONNECTIONS** Tip Sheets: Recording AFCARS Data & Progress Notes: Successfully Documenting Casework Contacts with Children in Foster Care ...pg. 3...more
- **OCFS Data Warehouse News** ...pg. 4...more

### *General "Info to Know"*

- **Portable Information Technology** ...pg. 5...more
- **NEW Postings to the CONNECTIONS Intranet** ... pg. 6...more
- **Weekly System Maintenance** ... pg. 6...more

## *"Info to Know" for Caseworkers*



**UPDATED** - Q4-08 Improvement Plan - Saturday, 1/24/09

### **UPDATED** - CONNECTIONS Application Downtime

*Please note that this piece has been updated since the edition last week.*

On **Saturday, January 24, 2009**, OCFS will implement the Q4-08 Quarterly Improvement Plan. The CONNECTIONS application will not be available from 7:00AM - 1:00PM, an application downtime of six (6) hours.

### **Q4-08 Improvement Plan**

Q4-08 will include important enhancements to the CONNECTIONS application that support programmatic changes, some ease of use enhancements, and several system

improvements. The major ease of use enhancements included in Q4-08 are recommendations from the Child Welfare System Transformation Business Team. The enhancements come from collaboration between OCFS, local district and voluntary agency casework and supervisory staff. Here is a list of the enhancement areas: Family Services Stage, Approvals, Permanency Hearing Report (PHR), Progress Notes, Investigation Stage, Foster and Adoptive Home Development (FAD), as well as System Messaging.

### Q4-08 Highlights Document

The *Q4-08 Highlights* document presents a high-level overview of programmatic and application modifications and enhancements. It is one in a series of tools that define and describe in detail the system changes and enhancements that will be included in this Quarterly Improvement Plan. The Highlights document is posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet website and can be accessed via the following link: [http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/imp/build18/Q4\\_08\\_Highlights\\_1.pdf](http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/imp/build18/Q4_08_Highlights_1.pdf)

### Q4-08 Release Notes

The *Q4-08 Improvement Plan Release Notes* provide an in-depth description of the improvements, modifications, enhancements (SIRS), and impacts that are included in this Quarterly Improvement Plan. It is one in a series of tools that define and describe in detail the system changes and enhancements that will be included in this Quarterly Improvement Plan. The Release Notes will be available on Tuesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>.

### CONNECTIONS Q4-08 Job Aid

The *Q4-08 Job Aid* is intended for CONNECTIONS users on different levels. It provides a detailed overview of the CONNECTIONS system changes and enhancements introduced in Q4-08. Specifically, this job aid contains information about enhancements in the following functional areas: Family Services Stage, Approvals, Permanency Hearing Report (PHR), Progress Notes, Investigation Stage, Foster and Adoptive Home Development (FAD), as well as System Messaging. For your convenience, the job aid is posted to the CONNECTIONS Intranet site on the Step-by-Step/Job Aid/Tips page and is available via the following link: <http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/Q4-08%20JAFinal.pdf>

### Q4-08 Impact Analysis - Allowing the Investigative Actions Task to be Optional

With the implementation of Q4-08 districts will be able to elect to make the Investigation Actions optional. If the district elects to do this, then it will **not** be system required for any district worker to complete the Investigation Actions. Until a district makes an affirmative decision to make the Investigation Actions optional, it remains as a required component of the Investigation and still must be completed. If a district wishes to make the Investigation Actions Task optional, the district must notify the Regional CONNECTIONS Field Staff of its decision, and a system change will be made for that district. This change can be done at any time and can be implemented in a relatively short time period once OCFS has been notified. For further information about what remains the same and implication considerations please refer to the Impact Analysis that is posted to the CONNECTIONS Intranet site on the Implementation page and is

available via the following link:  
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/imp/build18/Q4%20IA%20Invetigation%20Actions%201-09-09-final.pdf>

## Q4-08 Tools

The following are a list of tools to aid in implementing the Q4-08 system improvements.

- **Q4-08 Highlights**  
[http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/imp/build18/Q4\\_08\\_Highlights\\_1.pdf](http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/imp/build18/Q4_08_Highlights_1.pdf)
- **Q4-08 Release Notes**
- **Q4-08 Impact Analysis Allowing the Investigative Actions Task to be Optional**  
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/imp/build18/Q4%20IA%20Invetigation%20Actions%201-09-09-final.pdf>
- **CONNECTIONS Q4-08 Job Aid**  
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/Q4-08%20JAFinal.pdf>



## ***Two NEW CONNECTIONS Tip Sheets: Recording AFCARS Data and Progress Notes: Successfully Documenting Casework Contacts with Children in Foster Care***

Two NEW CONNECTIONS Tip Sheets have been developed by members of the CONNECTIONS Implementation Team!!!

- **Recording AFCARS Data**  
AFCARS is the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System. New York, like all states, is required to report adoption and foster care information to the federal government every 6 months. CONNECTIONS and other legacy systems, principally the Child Care Review Service (CCRS), are the data sources that meet federal reporting requirements. CONNECTIONS has been enhanced to capture additional AFCARS information on the **Removal Information**, **Placement Information**, and **Health** tabs and on the **Finalize Adoption** window. It is important that this data is accurately collected and entered as it is used to identify trends, plan for needed services, establish funding priorities, conduct research and evaluation, maintain/update regulations and respond to requests for data. The Tip Sheet walks you through the various tabs that record AFCARS data. The Tip Sheet is posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet on the Step-by-Step/Job Aids/Tips page and can be accessed via the following link:  
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/Tip%20sheets/Recording%20AFCARS%20Data%20v2.pdf>
- **Progress Notes: Successfully Documenting Casework Contact with Children in Foster Care**  
The federal Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-288), which was signed into law on September 28, 2006, includes requirements for caseworker visits with children in foster care.

The law requires that a casework contact be made with each child in foster care, at least once in every calendar month, for each whole month the child is in foster care - including any trial discharge periods and AWOL periods. Partial months of foster care are not counted. The majority of these contacts must occur where the child resides. The requirements pertain to children placed in-state, as well as out-of-state. All such contacts must be documented in CONNECTIONS progress notes and it is essential that entries be made contemporaneously with the event. The Progress Notes: Successfully Documenting Casework Contact with Children in Foster Care tip sheet illustrates and describes how to document a casework contact.

The Tip Sheet is posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet on the Step-by-Step/Job Aids/Tips page and can be accessed via the following link:  
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/Tip%20sheets/Progress%20notes-20Documenting%20Successful%20Casework%20Contact%20Final.pdf>



### ***OCFS Data Warehouse News***

- **Casework Contact and Track Child Roster Reports Available**  
The OCFS Data Warehouse Casework Contact Reports and Tracked Child Roster are once again available to all users. We have corrected several data issues that affected the accuracy of these reports. Thank you for your patience.
  
- **OCFS Data Warehouse News and Notes**  
The December 2008 edition of the *OCFS Data Warehouse News and Notes* is now available and posted to the OCFS Data Warehouse page of the CONNECTIONS intranet!  
  
This edition of the *News and Notes* presents articles on recent report enhancements, the status of the Cognos 8 migration, resource links, info about banner alerts, tips for troubleshooting and much, much more...check out the latest edition!  
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/datawarehouse/Data%20Warehouse%20Newsletter%20-%20Dec%202008.pdf>
  
- **AFCARS Reminder**  
The data for the Children Served with Missing Clinical Diagnosis (LDSS and Voluntary) Cognos reports have been updated as of 12/31/08.

## *General "Info to Know"*



### ***Portable Information Technology***

We are pleased to announce that OCFS has teamed up with OFT installations to facilitate the deployment for Portable Technology 08 - 09. Participating Local Districts have been contacted via an email from Dave Kislowski, and were forwarded an equipment inventory document for their site with specific serial numbers identified.

#### **Instructions to Facilitate Deployment**

On the equipment inventory document, begin with the oldest equipment first (IBM 6579's), place an X next to the equipment you will be replacing and complete the field location / floor / room. When completed, please submit the excel document to [ocfs.sm.deployment](mailto:ocfs.sm.deployment). Our hope is that this information will minimize the onsite reliance of the LAN administrators. With this completed document LAN Administrators can continue to support the users while we are completing the installation.

We would also like to remind LAN Administrators that all data needs to be removed and saved out to the users H drive. Once the old equipment is de-installed the information will no longer be retrievable.

#### **Client VPN Request Form**

Also, attached to the communication was the Client VPN request form to take a proactive attempt at ensuring each user has the permissions prior to the deployment to access HSEN from the field using the new laptops. This request needs to be submitted to [ocfs.sm.comctrup](mailto:ocfs.sm.comctrup) by the LSA of your District. For your convenience, a copy of the request form is posted below.



VPN Request Form  
Instructions....

#### **Questions**

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Dave Kislowski at either (work) 518-486-9522, or (cell) 518-506-1264.

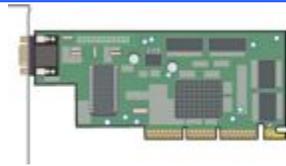
**Please Note:** a deployment schedule will be created when the all of the completed excel documents are received. Your cooperation is appreciated.



## ***NEW Postings to the CONNECTIONS Intranet***

The following document(s) was recently posted to the CONNECTIONS intranet website:

- **...CONNECTIONS NEWS...**  
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/>
- **CONNECTIONS Q4-08 Job Aid**  
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/Q4-08%20JAFinal.pdf>
- **Q4-08 Impact Analysis - Allowing the Investigative Actions Task to be Optional**  
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/imp/build18/Q4%20IA%20Invetigation%20Actions%201-09-09-final.pdf>
- **Recording AFCARS Data**  
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/Tip%20sheets/Recording%20AFCARS%20Data%20v2.pdf>
- **Progress Notes: Successfully Documenting Casework Contact with Children in Foster Care**  
<http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/Tip%20sheets/Progress%20notes-20Documenting%20Successful%20Casework%20Contact%20Final.pdf>



## ***Weekly System Maintenance***

Due to regularly scheduled system maintenance, the CONNECTIONS application will not be available on...

**\*\*Please note the downtime for Saturday 1/24/09**

- **Wednesday, 1/21/09** from 5:00 AM - 7:00 AM
- **Friday, 1/23/09** from 5:00 AM - 7:00 AM
- **\*\*Saturday, 1/24/09** from 7:00AM - 1:00PM for the implementation of Q4-08



Office of  
Children & Family  
Services  
Gladys Carrión, Esq.  
Commissioner